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SPEECH
OF
HON. F. W. KELLOGG,
OF MICHIGAN,
ON THE AMENDMENT TO THE
CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JUNE 15, 1864.

The House having under consideration the joint resolution to amend the Constitution of the United States—Mr. F. W. KELLOGG said:

Mr. SPEAKER: I have had no time to prepare remarks for this occasion that would be worthy of a subject of such importance to the people of this country as that which we have now before us; but I cannot avoid expressing my opinions and feelings on this question, and, standing here for my constituents, to declare in their behalf my desire that the amendment of the Constitution which this bill contemplates shall finally prevail.

There are so many reasons and so many arguments that might be urged in behalf of this measure that I hardly know where to begin. It seems to me that our prosperity as a people, our progress in civilization, and our duty to mankind, demand such an amendment of the Constitution, and that if we evade it we shall be guilty of treason to human liberty and human rights.

The American Revolution of 1776 was the great event of the eighteenth century, and in my opinion the greatest event of the last eighteen hundred years, and one even of more importance than any other that has taken place in the civilized world. It was not because it severed the connection of the thirteen colonies with the mother country and erected them into an independent nation, but because the result of that Revolution was the establishment of a Government based upon principles not recognized in any other in all the history of the past. It was an attempt to create political institutions that should harmonize in practice with the great cardinal principles of Christianity as taught by Christ and His apostles, principles which I believe are yet to prevail universally and make their way to the dominion of the world. They were new in the history of nations, for they taught the duty of protecting the poor and succoring the oppressed, and enjoined the deliverance of all men from the bondage of body or soul and the education and consequent elevation of the race.

Mr. Speaker, they are well expressed in the Declaration of Independence, which affirms that all men are created equal and possessed of rights which are inalienable that Governments can rightfully exist only with the consent of the governed, and that they are established for the protection of the humblest as well as the most exalted member of the body-politic, and to secure them in the enjoyment of those rights with which God endowed them when He gave them existence.

It was a belief in the possibility of such a Government that caused the American Revolution and carried our ancestors successfully through it. They had a conviction that these principles must finally prevail, and their faith sustained them in a most unequal contest till they were finally victorious, and won for themselves a name and place among the nations of the earth.

But their trials did not end with the advent of peace, and something more must be done if they would secure the political blessings for which they had sacrificed so much blood and treasure. The partial union of the States under the Articles of Confederation enabled them to achieve their independence, but the Government it created possessed so little power that it could not provide for the payment of the public debt nor command the respect of the people. It was apparent to all that it was necessary to form a more perfect Union and establish a Government with sufficient powers for the emergency which called it into being, and to preserve the liberties and the national independence which had been so dearly won. In this crisis of our history, when wise men knew not what to do, George Washington, our great leader in the struggle for independence, who I devoutly believe was raised up by God for this occasion, called together, for consultation, his illustrious associates in the Revolution, in the hope that they might by their united wisdom accomplish what the people so ardently desired.

They assembled in Philadelphia, where Congress first proclaimed the Declaration of Independence, to devise a way to give force and effect to its provisions, and after months spent in solemn deliberation and discussion, they succeeded in framing a Constitution as perfect in all its parts that it seems almost the work of inspiration.

The object of this Constitution was admirably expressed in its preamble, which declares that—

"We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

It established a national Government, with ample powers for all purposes, and promising every blessing to the people; it was approved and adopted by them, and thus became the supreme law of the land. The statesmen and philosophers of the Old World admired it; the prosperity of the American people for three quarters of a century testifies its worth; and we all feel and be-

lieve that it is the grandest work of human genius and human wisdom the world has ever known. But while it was adapted to the condition of the country at that time, the great men who devised it saw that some change might be necessary in the future, and wisely provided a way for its amendment so difficult an accidental majority could not affect it, yet easily accomplished when it was plainly the wish of the people. Several amendments have been made already, and no one has questioned their wisdom or doubted their utility. But the one which we propose is more important than any that has been offered in the past or that is likely to be presented in the future. Its adoption is necessary if we wish to carry out the objects of the Constitution itself as set forth in the preamble, and remove the cause of discord and contention from our midst. We propose to insert an article prohibiting slavery throughout the Republic; and unless this is done I fear we shall experience greater calamities in the future than we have suffered already.

I am aware that many in this House object to this amendment, and I confess I am amazed at the opposition to a measure of such vital importance to our country. We are told that slavery is dead, that the war has destroyed it, and this provision in the Constitution is unnecessary; but I do not believe it.

If the rebels should lay down their arms to-day and submit to the Constitution and laws of the United States, slavery would still exist and continue to exist increasing in influence and strength with each succeeding year until it would plunge us into greater difficulties than we are involved in now. If they believe it is dead why object to making it certain, why not render its resurrection impossible and set the public mind at rest on this question forever?

I was surprised to hear it asserted on this floor that we had no right to amend the Constitution in the absence of those who are mainly affected by the provision we would adopt. What, sir! Have we no right to change the organic law of the land when we act in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution itself, obeying it to the very letter? If the southern States are not represented it is not our fault, but theirs. Their Representatives left these Halls voluntarily without any cause whatever, and if we sit here as the Congress of the United States in obedience to the Constitution and the laws what right have they to complain of our action however it may affect them?

We are told too that this is an interference with the rights of the people of the slave States, rights which were solemnly guaranteed to them by the Constitution. Sir, what right have rebels under a Constitution which they have set at naught? What right under laws they refuse to obey? What rights under a Government they declare their determination to destroy? Sir, I cannot understand the logic of these gentlemen, nor do I believe them to be serious in their objection.

Mr. Speaker, the people demand that this shall be done. There is more unanimity among them in favor of this measure than any

on which we are called to act. The men of the country who are determined to preserve the Constitution and the Union, and who are pouring out their blood so freely in their defense are everywhere in favor of this amendment of the Constitution, and intensely anxious to see it adopted by this Congress and submitted to the States for their approval.

Gentlemen who sit on this floor as the Representatives of the people will vote as they think best, and in accordance, no doubt, with their views of duty, but I believe that those who vote against this measure will find it difficult to justify themselves to their constituents, and be compelled to relinquish their seats to men of different views hereafter.

Mr. Speaker, what is there in the institution of slavery as it exists in this country that should make us feel so tender and forbearing toward it? I cannot imagine a single reason that can be urged in its favor. It is a social, political, and moral evil, without a single redeeming feature, and its immediate abolition would be the greatest blessing that could be conferred upon our country or even upon the States where it now exists. The laws enacted for its protection are more wicked and barbarous than the statutes and decrees of any despot in the civilized world. It fosters ignorance, inculcates a hatred of the principles of liberty, and sanctions customs and practices of the most revolting character. Before the war broke out the principal exports of some of the States were human beings, who were daily sold in the markets of the South. The people of Virginia have sold men and women enough within the last fifty years, who were born and raised in their midst, to pay for all the real estate and personal property they were possessed of at the commencement of the rebellion. It was the business of many of them to breed human beings for sale and live on the proceeds, as the farmers of the West live and grow rich by raising herds of cattle and driving them to market. What cared they for the sufferings of families whom they separated, or the anguish of those whom they sold from their homes to the planters of the South? It was a trade that was sanctioned by public sentiment and the churches of the country, and protected by the laws and constitution of the State and the nation also; and why not, since it was part and parcel of the system and necessary to its existence? If we had prohibited the exportation of slaves from Virginia we should have destroyed slavery in that State immediately by making it unprofitable. We see then that slavery and the slave trade are inseparable, and while we have the one we must the other.

Sir, I do not wonder that some men are unable to speak of this organized system of iniquity with calmness and composure. Its cruelty and wickedness are enough to fill the soul with horror and send reason reeling from her throne.

We have called John Brown a fanatic; we have said that he was crazy, and I should not wonder if he was. He was a man who had a clear perception of the wickedness of slavery, and was

so affected by it that he could think of nothing else. "Here," said he, "are millions of human beings whom God made and Christ died for, who are robbed of every right by a people professedly Christian. They are men, but they must not read the word of God; they have no right to any reward for their labor; no right to their wives; no right to their children; no right to themselves! The law makes them property and affords them no protection, and what are the Christian people of this country doing about it? Nothing at all! Congress is discussing another compromise which if adopted will perpetuate this infernal system a century longer. Bishops and doctors of divinity are preaching in its favor, the press is rallying to its support, and our great cities, the centers of trade and commerce, will not suffer it to be disturbed; but I cannot endure it any longer, and I will utter my protest against it in such a way that the world shall hear me if I die the next moment." And he did die; but his death woke up the nation, and I trust we shall never sleep again on this subject till we have swept the last vestige of slavery from the land.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. COFFROTH] who preceded me says slavery was not the cause of the rebellion; but I do not agree with him. I know the leading men of the South had been conspiring against this Government for twenty-five years, and were resolved to establish another of a different character altogether. But what caused this conspiracy against the best Government that ever existed? What but slavery itself and its influence upon them? It taught them to love absolute power, imbued them with a hatred of democratic ideas and institutions, and a love for those social and political distinctions in society which prevailed in the Governments of the Old World. De Bow, in his Review, the acknowledged organ of southern sentiments, affirms that republican institutions are a failure, and that an aristocratic form of government is the best for any people. True, said he, if you have an aristocracy you must have paupers, but better have it, notwithstanding. They would degrade the laboring classes to a condition below that of the peasantry of Europe and render it impossible for them to rise in society. The atrocious sentiment that it was better for society that the capitalists of the country should own the laborers, whether white or black, found ready advocates among them. In the government they wished to establish in the place of one founded by Washington they would have but two classes, masters and slaves.

Who does not see that civil war was inevitable under such circumstances, and that slavery was the cause of it? The gentleman from Pennsylvania thinks we might have prevented it by adopting a conciliatory course toward the South, but he offers no evidence in support of the assertion. I was here when the rebellion broke out, and I do not believe the adoption of the Crittenden compromise, so called, would have postponed the war for a single week. Southern Senators laughed at the idea of being satisfied in such a way. They were determined to dissolve the Union and

establish a separate government in conformity with their ideas, and they firmly believed that we would allow them to do so. They had a supreme contempt for the people of the North, and never dreamed of the difficulties in the way or the opposition they were to encounter. They had made up their minds to do as they pleased, and set the Government of the United States at defiance. It was the last great effort of slavery for the control of this continent, and will end in its annihilation. Heaven and earth are arrayed against it, and what can save it now? God made the human race subject to the law of progress, and all the slaveholders of the country and their friends and advocates in this House or elsewhere will fail to put any brakes on the chariot wheels of Almighty God, and prevent the onward march of all mankind toward that liberty and independence which He has promised them at some period in the far-off future.

Mr. Speaker, I regret that any one should be found on the floor of either House who would propose peace on terms which are degrading to every American citizen, and which would destroy the Government of the United States. A day or two since a resolution was introduced in the Senate [by Mr. DAVIS, of Kentucky] calling upon the President to take steps to secure peace at any price, and, if necessary, to consent to the recognition of the rebel government rather than continue the war. Such an act on our part would bring upon us the contempt of the whole world and the curses of our posterity. If the South became an independent nation they would form alliance with France and England, and be ready in a few years to renew the war. Let no one suppose we should be able to live long in peace with them, or that a pretext would be wanting on their part for a rupture. A confession of our inability to vanquish them would increase their contempt for us, and, burning with a desire to avenge their fancied wrongs, they would seize the first occasion to involve us in a war more desolating than we are engaged in now. Better fight this out now, for, come what will, we cannot consent to a dissolution of the Union; that would be the greatest calamity that could befall us.

The opponents of the Government who belong to the peace-at-any-price party are anxious to convince the people that they cannot carry on this war much longer because of the expense involved in it, and that national bankruptcy and financial ruin are inevitable. One of my colleagues, who I am sorry to say is not a friend of the Administration, fixes the liabilities of the national Government on the 1st day of July next at \$3,000,000,000. The people in his opinion cannot pay the interest on this debt much longer; but if he is a friend of the Union, as he assures me that he is, I am confident that he will thank me for showing him that he is mistaken. The entire indebtedness of the nation at the close of the fiscal year in July next will not exceed \$1,800,000,000, and should the war continue a year longer, it will not reach the amount which he asserts is due already. We have ample means

for the payment of this debt were it much larger than it ever will be. In 1850 our national wealth amounted in round numbers to \$7,000,000,000. In 1860 it had reached the sum of \$16,000,000,000; and should it continue to increase in the same ratio for the next forty years it will amount to more than \$400,000,000,000. Our population will soon be double what it now is, and the debt we incur in suppressing the rebellion will not be large in comparison with our resources. Our taxes may be burdensome for a while, but the people are willing to pay them. They know what this Government is worth and they will not suffer it to be destroyed.

But we are told that we cannot conquer the South. Sir, if we do not conquer them they will conquer us. One side or the other must be subdued. There is no escaping that result and no peace to be had on any other terms. Those who have watched the progress of the great commander whose army is now thundering at the gates of Richmond believe he will be successful, and that no matter how bravely the rebels may fight, no matter what skill and genius they may display in the handling of their armies, no matter how despair may nerve their arms, their defeat is inevitable, and they will have to submit at last to the armies of the Union.

Fresh troops are pouring in from every part of the country and the northwestern States alone have furnished one hundred thousand men in the last thirty days for the reinforcement of our armies.

Ohio tendered thirty-five thousand, and the most of them were ready to march as soon as they were accepted. They were ordered to man the forts and defenses of the frontier, but when they saw our wounded heroes borne back from the battle-field they besought the President to order them to the front, that they too might prove their devotion to their country and peril their lives in its defense. Michigan has furnished more than her quota of men for every campaign since the commencement of the war. Thousands of her sons have fallen in battle and sleep on southern soil, but I trust when the last trumpet sounds they will rise under the same flag that waved over them when they fell.

While our armies are fighting our battles the people have nominated our worthy President for another term, and intend to elect him by an overwhelming majority. They have confidence in his patriotism and ability, and laugh at the silly charges of our enemies that he will rob them of their liberties and despoil them of their rights. They will sustain him in whatever he may do at this time for the salvation of the Union. Sir, it is not the friends of the Government, not those who desire its preservation, nor those who love liberty and hate despotism, who complain of the Executive or feel aggrieved at anything he may do. It is your half-way traitor, the sympathizer with treason, who will do all he can in behalf of the enemies of the Union and escape conviction under the laws. These are the men who are prating about tyranny, talking about arbitrary arrests, and denouncing those who would save the country at any hazard whatever.

Sir, the Constitution confers sufficient power upon the President to enable him to put down this rebellion, and the people expect he will use it against the enemies of the Republic, whoever they may be.

The able statesman whom we have selected for the second place in the people's gift resides in the South; but those who have listened to his denunciations of treason, and who know his hatred of slavery, his love of liberty, and his devotion to the cause of human rights, rejoice that he has been chosen for a post of such importance, and will give him their hearty and undivided support.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot magnify the importance of the issues involved in this conflict for the supremacy of the Government and the integrity of the nation. Our cause is that of the whole family of man, and every lover of liberty in the Old World is watching the progress of this struggle with intense solicitude. Never since the Son of God died on Calvary has any event transpired upon earth in which every human being is so deeply interested as in the result of this contest. It will settle the question of man's capacity for self-government and settle it forever.

If this Republic is destroyed no other will rise upon its ruins, but if we are successful other nations will follow our example, till liberty is universal.

Sir, my trust is in the intelligence and patriotism of the people, and may God help us to preserve our liberties and institutions, and transmit them unimpaired to our posterity.